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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Griffiss Institute Advances Defense Innovation in the Mohawk Valley with Launch of HUSTLE 2025-2 Accelerator Cohort

Applications now open through November 7, 2025



Members of HUSTLE cohort 2025-1, Griffiss Institute staff, and Accelerator partners – including Southwest Mission Acceleration Center – at Playas Research and Training Center in Playas, New Mexico for the cohort's culminating tech demonstration event in August 2025. Photo by Griffiss Institute.

Rome, NY - October 23, 2025 - Griffiss Institute (GI) has opened applications for its next HUSTLE Defense Accelerator cohort (2025-2). HUSTLE, which stands for *Helping Upstate Science and Technology Leaders and Entrepreneurs*, continues GI's mission to drive defense innovation and strengthen the Mohawk Valley's role in national security technology development. Even amid temporary federal slowdowns, Griffiss Institute and its partners are maintaining momentum, advancing critical innovation from Rome, New York.

The next HUSTLE cohort will center on strengthening the Air Force's Command, Control, Communication, and Battle Management (C3BM) capabilities through artificial intelligence (AI). Participants will develop AI-enhanced systems that improve decision-making, coordination, and

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resiliency across the Air Force's Battle Network.

This will build on the program's recent restructuring, expanding HUSTLE from an annual accelerator with a broad focus into a semiannual national initiative that partners with organizations across the country. Each cohort is designed to address specific challenges and clearly defined problem sets identified by the Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate (AFRL) and other mission partners.

"We've redesigned HUSTLE from the ground up to deliver a leaner, more targeted experience for participants," said Michael Feng, Senior Director of Innovation & Partnerships at Griffiss Institute. "By connecting teams to mission partners from day one, we're fostering meaningful relationships that carry through well beyond the accelerator."

Selected startups will explore both AI for Command and Control (AI assisting human decision-making) and Command and Control of AI (managing autonomous systems), bringing together companies with complementary expertise in AI development, systems integration, and data distribution to co-create interoperable, next-generation solutions.

Over an intensive eight-week program, selected teams will:

- Work directly with AFRL on AI in C2 & C2 in AI
- Compete for up to \$600k in SAFE note funding
- Build strategic relationships with government and industry leaders
- Receive mentorship on government contracting and partnerships
- Join a growing ecosystem of national defense innovators

"Griffiss Institute has been fantastic to work with," said David Youngs, Co-Founder and Business Development Director at LiveLink Aerospace, a participant in the 2025-1 HUSTLE cohort. "Throughout this program, the level of guidance, support, and engagement has been absolutely top tier. It's been a brilliantly run program with exceptional people leading and supporting every step of the way."

This sentiment is echoed across past participants, many of whom credit HUSTLE as a key inflection point in their company's growth.

"As a HUSTLE '23 alumnus, the experience has been invaluable to the growth of our company," added Kaylon Paterson, Founder and CEO of Paterson Aerospace Systems. "The Griffiss Institute provided our team with access to their incubation space at the Innovare Advancement Center, assisted with Tech Transfer and research agreements, and enabled us to focus on our business development for the past two years. HUSTLE took our company out of stealth mode and directly into the B2G pipeline in a few short months!"

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Beyond its direct impact on participants, the HUSTLE program also reinforces Griffiss Institute's broader mission to drive innovation and grow Central New York's tech ecosystem. Over the last four years, GI has attracted 24 startups into the program, with three relocating their businesses directly into the Innovare Advancement Center in Rome, NY.

Applications for HUSTLE 2025-2 are open through November 7, 2025. Selected teams will pitch virtually after the deadline, with the top five teams advancing to the accelerator in early 2026.

To learn more about the accelerator, its sponsors, or to apply, visit
<https://www.griffissinstitute.org/hustle/>

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[About Griffiss Institute](#)

Griffiss Institute is a 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Rome, NY, accelerating national security innovation through its three-pillar mission of Talent, Technology, and Venture Development. As the steward of the Innovare Advancement Center, an open, unclassified research and collaboration campus, Griffiss Institute fosters and drives partnerships across government, industry, and academia to advance dual-use technologies. Griffiss Institute is committed to strengthening national security through nontraditional STEM education, accelerated innovation, and the commercialization of emerging technologies, with a deep belief in American-made solutions, the reshoring of advanced manufacturing, and the development of a resilient U.S. science and engineering workforce.

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